

The Industrial Revolution in America

Euramerican National Assembly

Agenda

Discuss how the United States transformed from a quiet agrarian nation into an industrial powerhouse over the course of the late 18th and 19th centuries.

Timeline



First Industrial Revolution
(1760 - 1840)

**Preindustrial
Period**

Agricultural
Handmade Goods
Rural Life

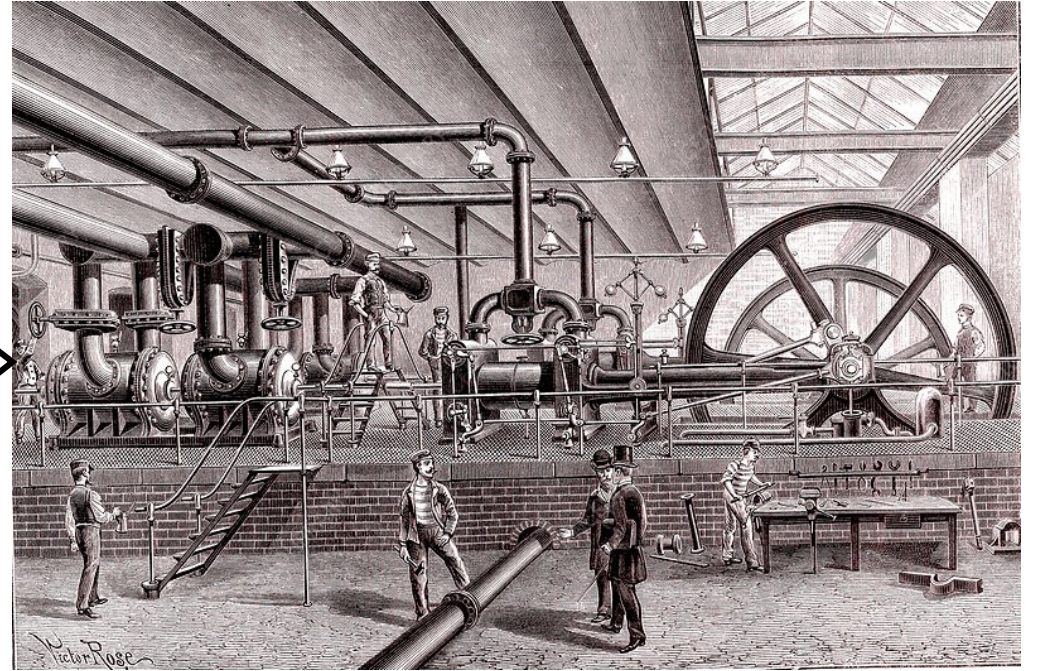
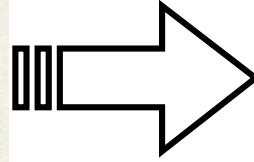
Industrial Period 1

Steam Power
Factories Begin

Second Industrial Revolution
(1870 - 1914)

Industrial Period 2

Electricity
Mass Production



At its core, this revolution was a massive shift in how humans worked. It moved the economy away from manual labor, farm labor, and handicrafts, progressing society toward mass industrialization and a wage-labor system.



Before this era, the U.S. was overwhelmingly agrarian. Most families farmed for subsistence. The non-agrarian output was highly localized—mostly small resource processing like gristmills for grain and sawmills for timber.

William Pitt, 1st Earl of Chatham

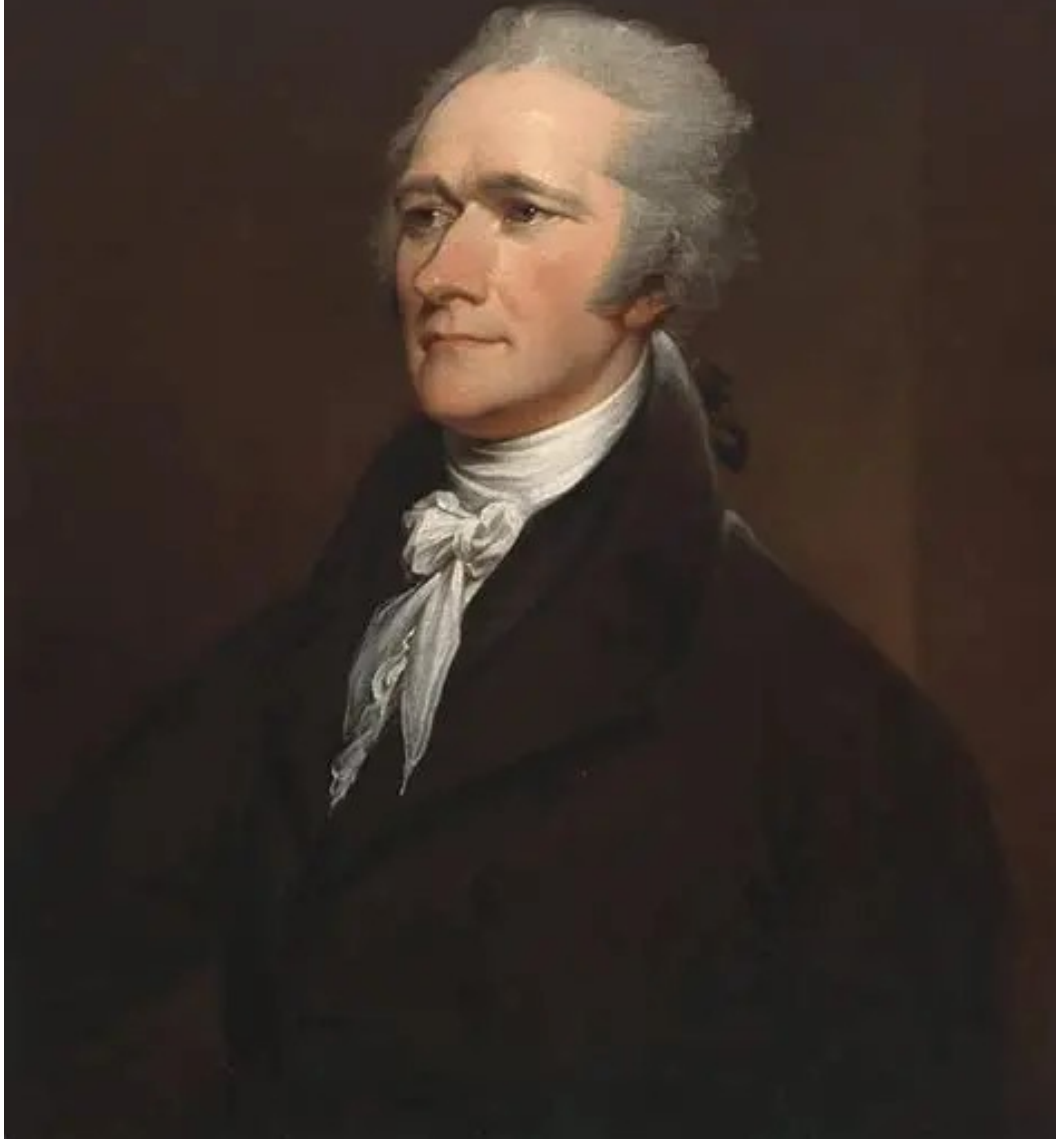


Britain intentionally kept the Thirteen Colonies from industrializing to prevent competition. In 1770, British leader William Pitt stated that "the colonies should not be permitted to manufacture so much as a horseshoe nail."

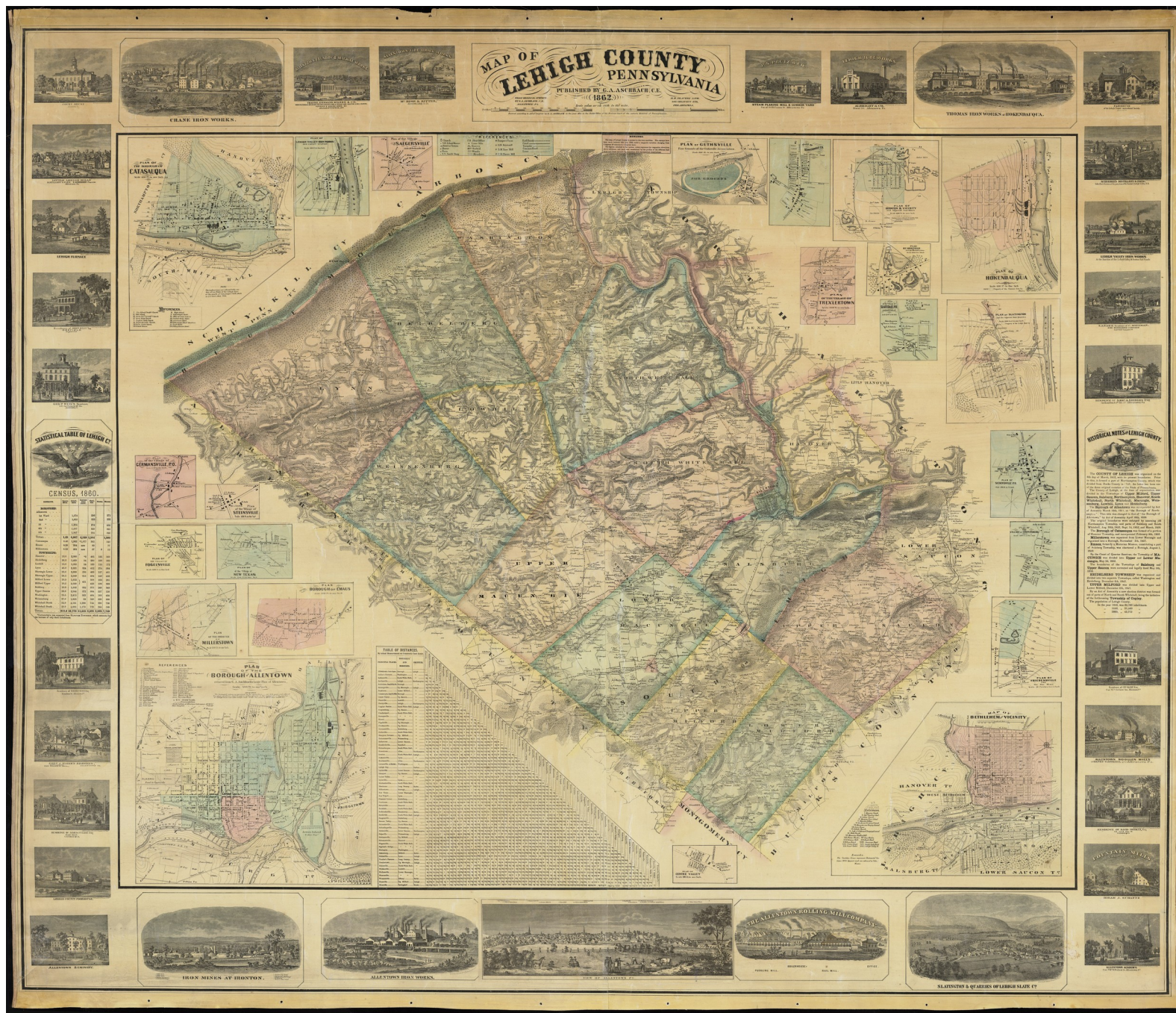


America's reliance on British goods became a crisis. Thomas Jefferson's Embargo Act of 1807 and the War of 1812 cut off imported goods. To survive, the U.S. **had** to expand its domestic industries across the board.

Alexander Hamilton

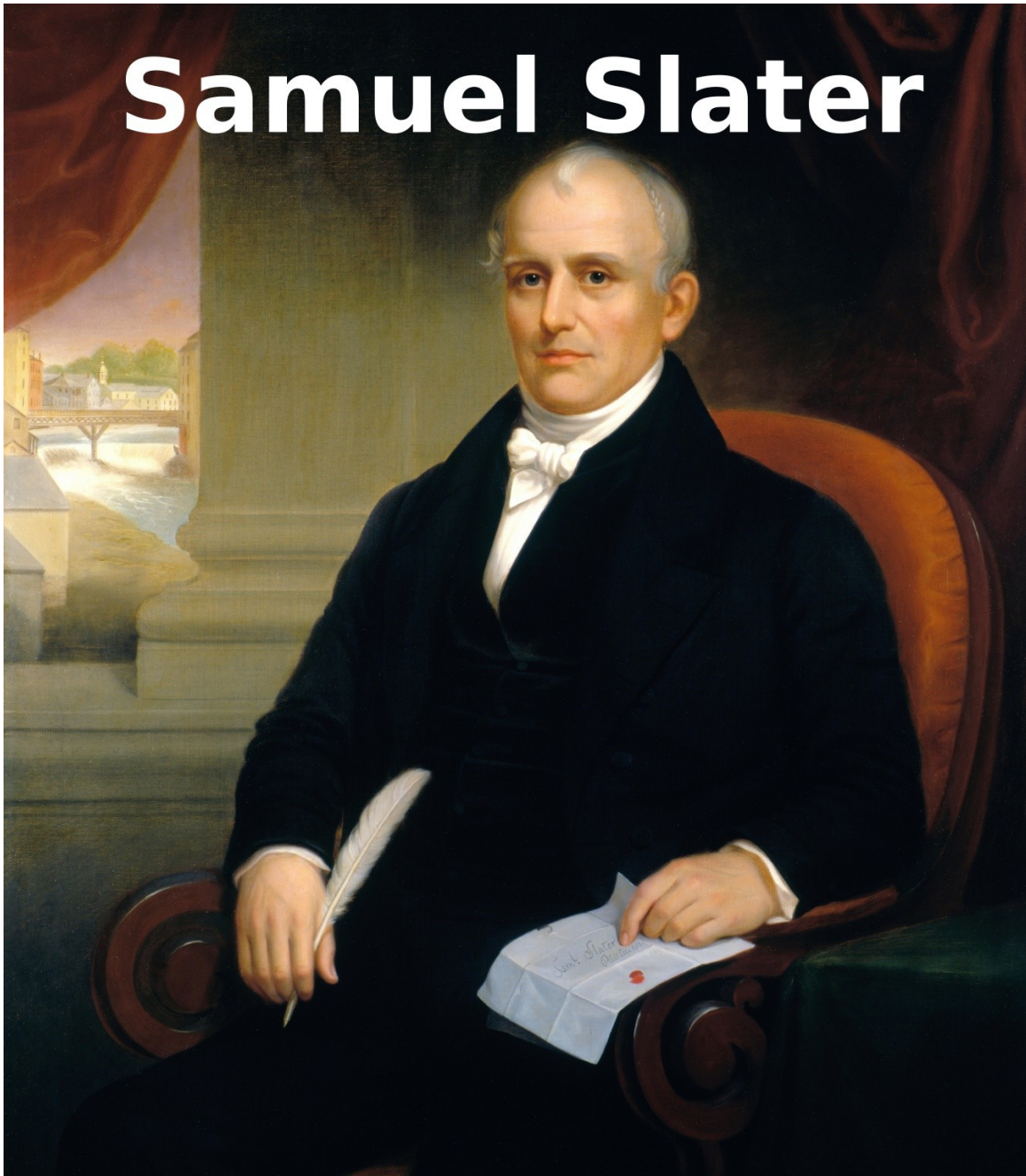


Visionaries saw the need for change. Hamilton proposed the "American School" of economics, and Henry Clay pushed the "American System"—advocating for protective tariffs and federal support for canals and roads to move manufactured goods.

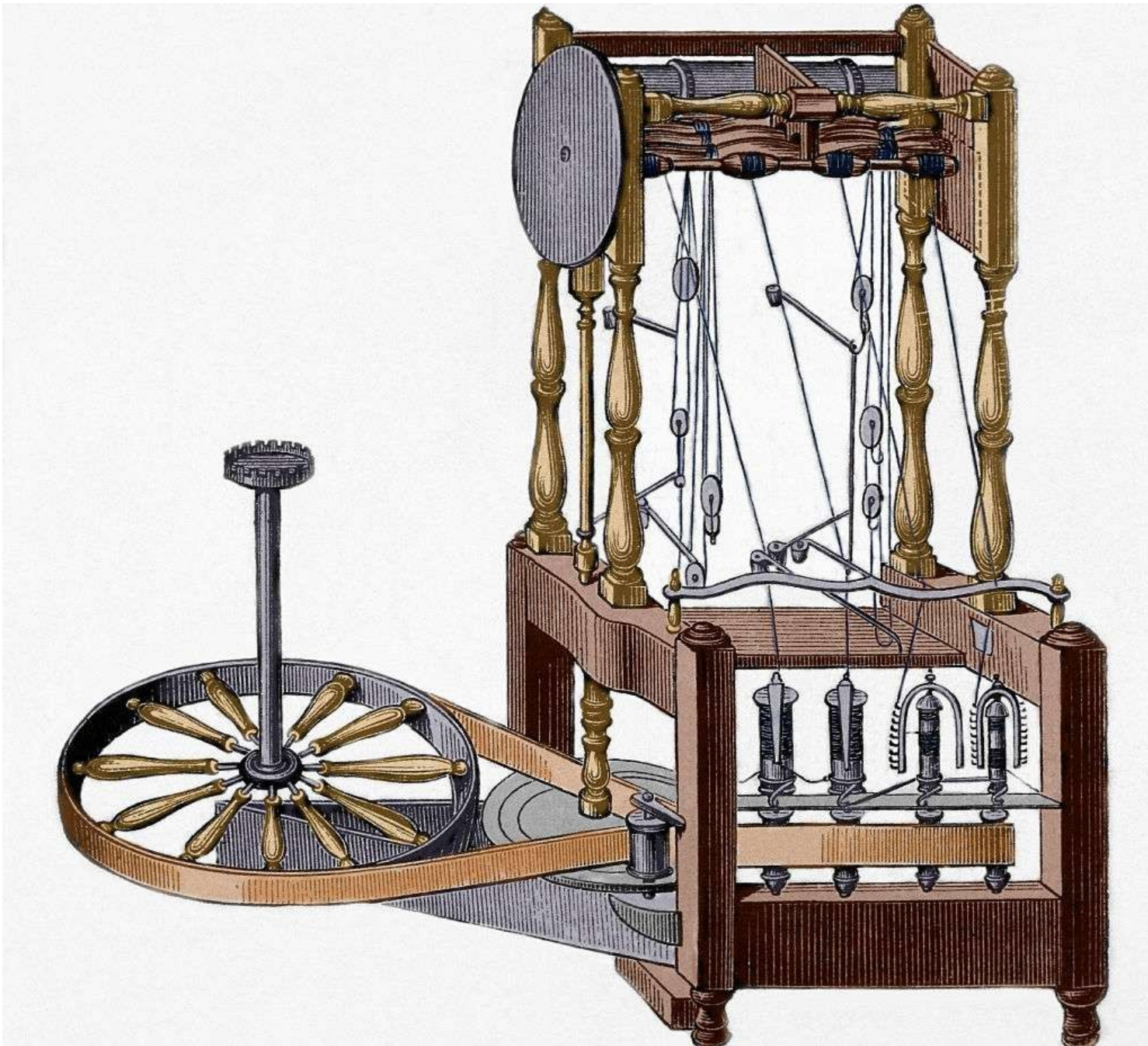


Much of the early industrial boom originated in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania. With abundant anthracite coal and iron ore, it became an early global leader in manufacturing and steel production.

Samuel Slater



Enter Samuel Slater. Born in England, he apprenticed in a textile mill. Knowing America wanted textile technology, but that exporting British designs was illegal, Slater memorized the complex machinery blueprints and sailed for New York.



In Britain, he was dubbed "Slater the Traitor." But in the U.S., Andrew Jackson later called him the "Father of the American Industrial Revolution." He teamed up with Rhode Island industrialist Moses Brown to build America's first water-powered textile mill.



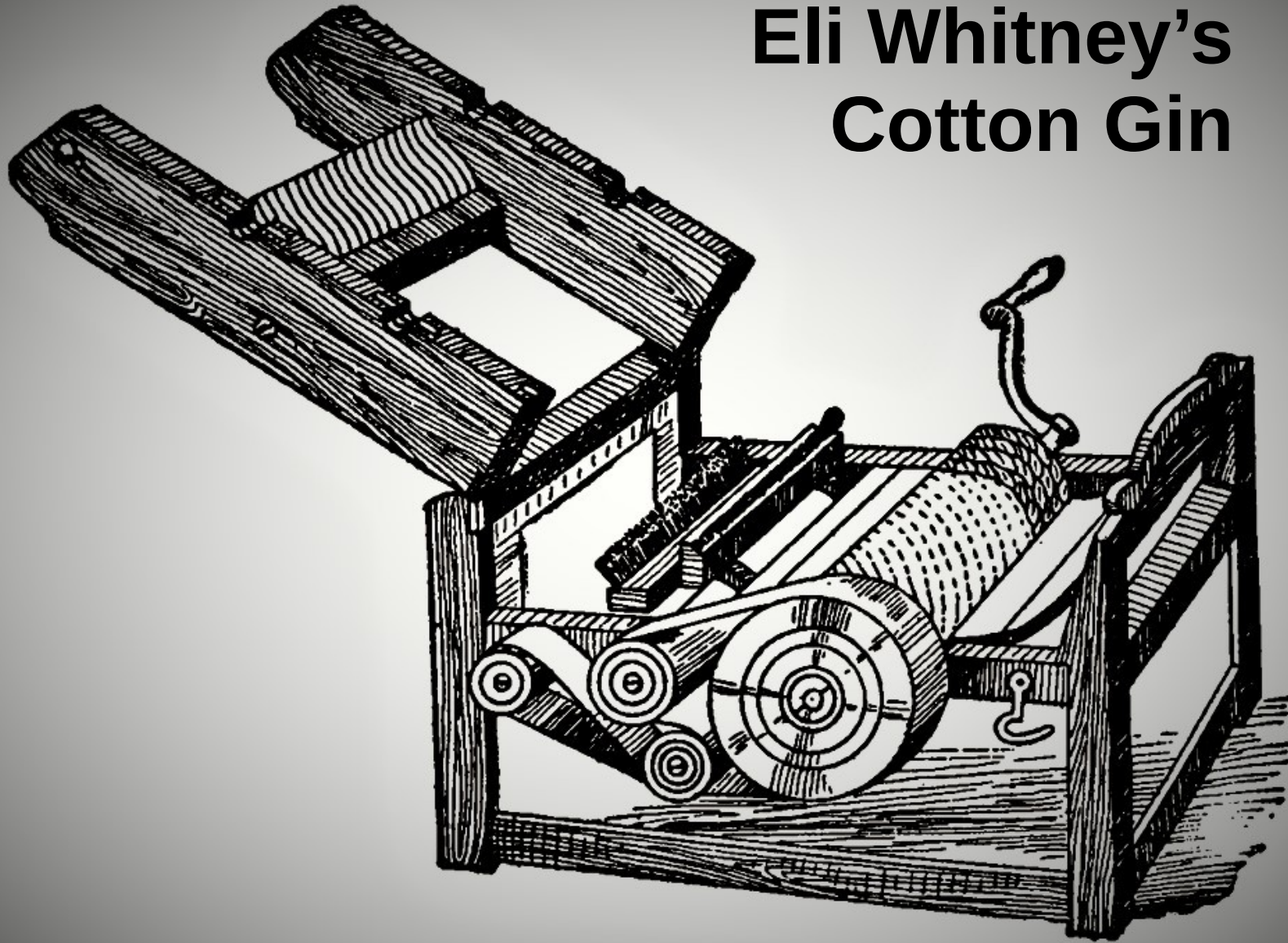
Opened in 1793, this was the first successful water-powered roller spinning textile mill in America. By 1800, Slater's mill design had been duplicated by dozens of entrepreneurs, launching the American textile industry.

Collins Axe Factory - 1826

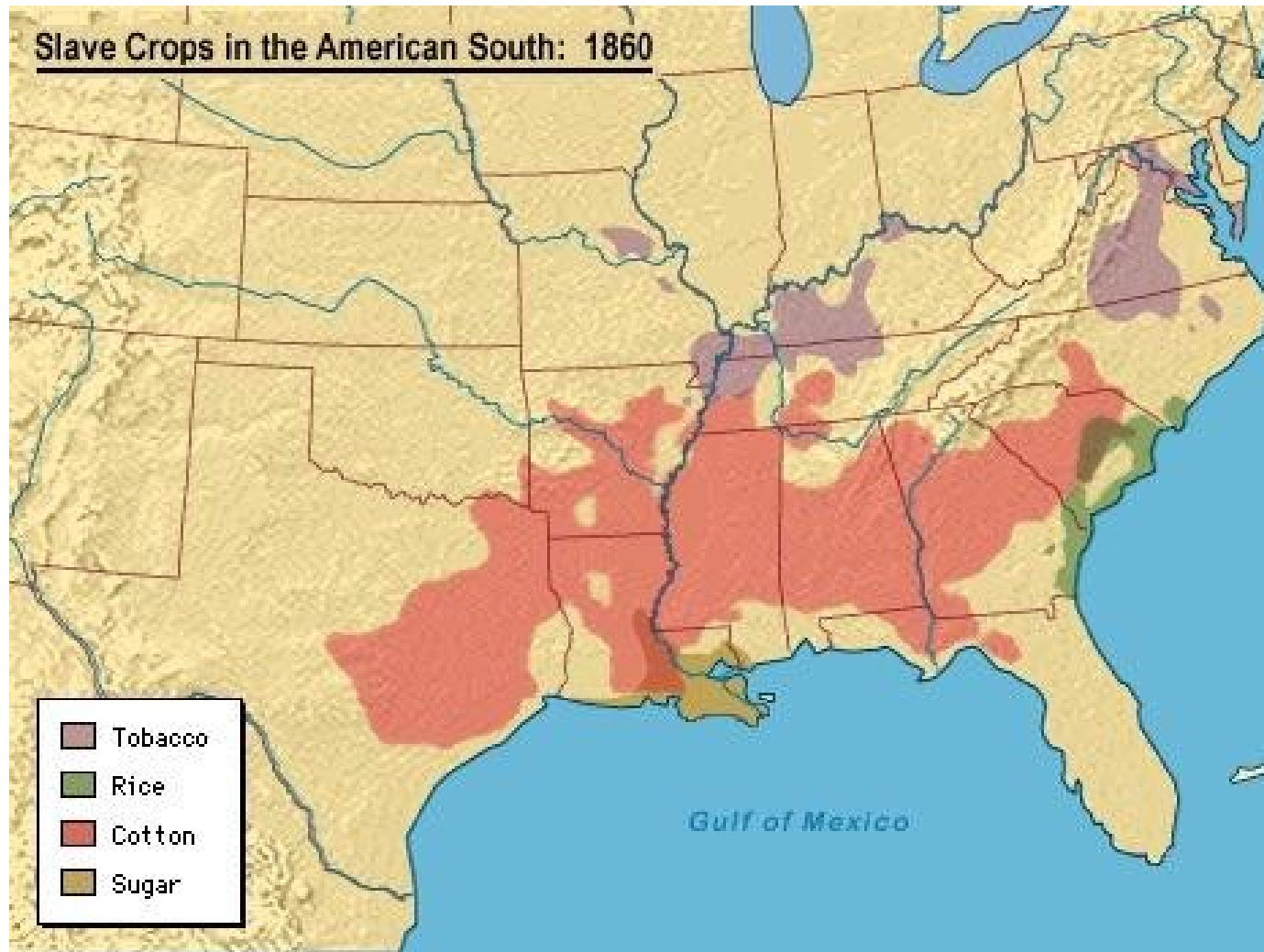


Because these early machines relied on water power, early U.S. plants had to be located next to fast-flowing rivers and streams. This is why the Northeast—particularly New England—became the epicenter of the First Industrial Revolution.

Eli Whitney's Cotton Gin



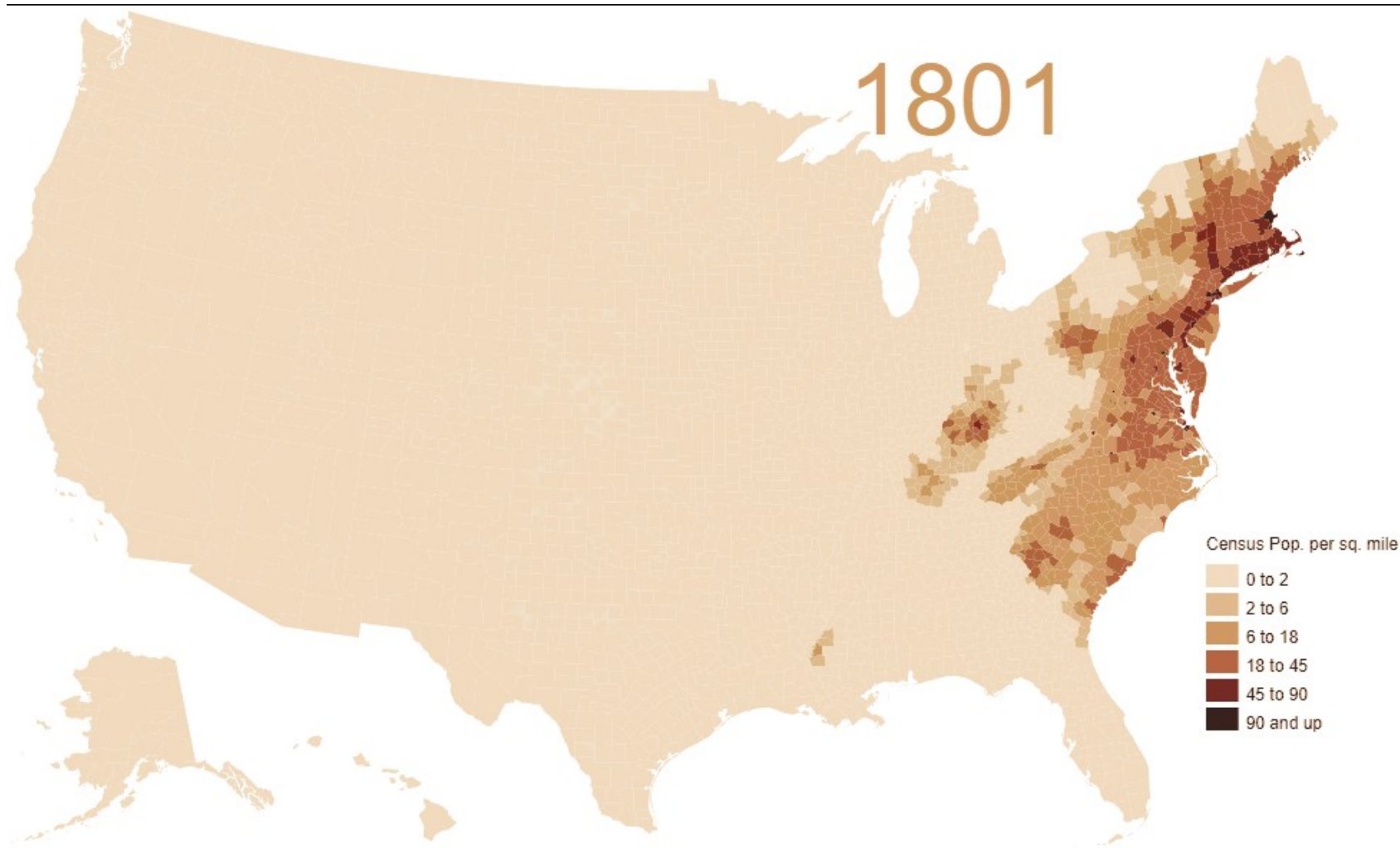
Meanwhile, in the South, Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1794. It mechanized the arduous process of separating cotton fibers from seeds, making cotton processing exponentially faster and highly profitable.



While it spurred the Northern textile boom, the cotton gin had a dark societal impact. It cemented the profitability of slavery. By the mid-19th century, Southern slave plantations supplied 75% of the entire world's cotton.



Industrialization wasn't just textiles. Fleeing the French Revolution, the du Pont family arrived in America. Noting the poor quality of American gunpowder, E.I. du Pont opened a powder mill in Delaware in 1802, soon becoming the top supplier to the U.S. military.



Population of the United States - 1801

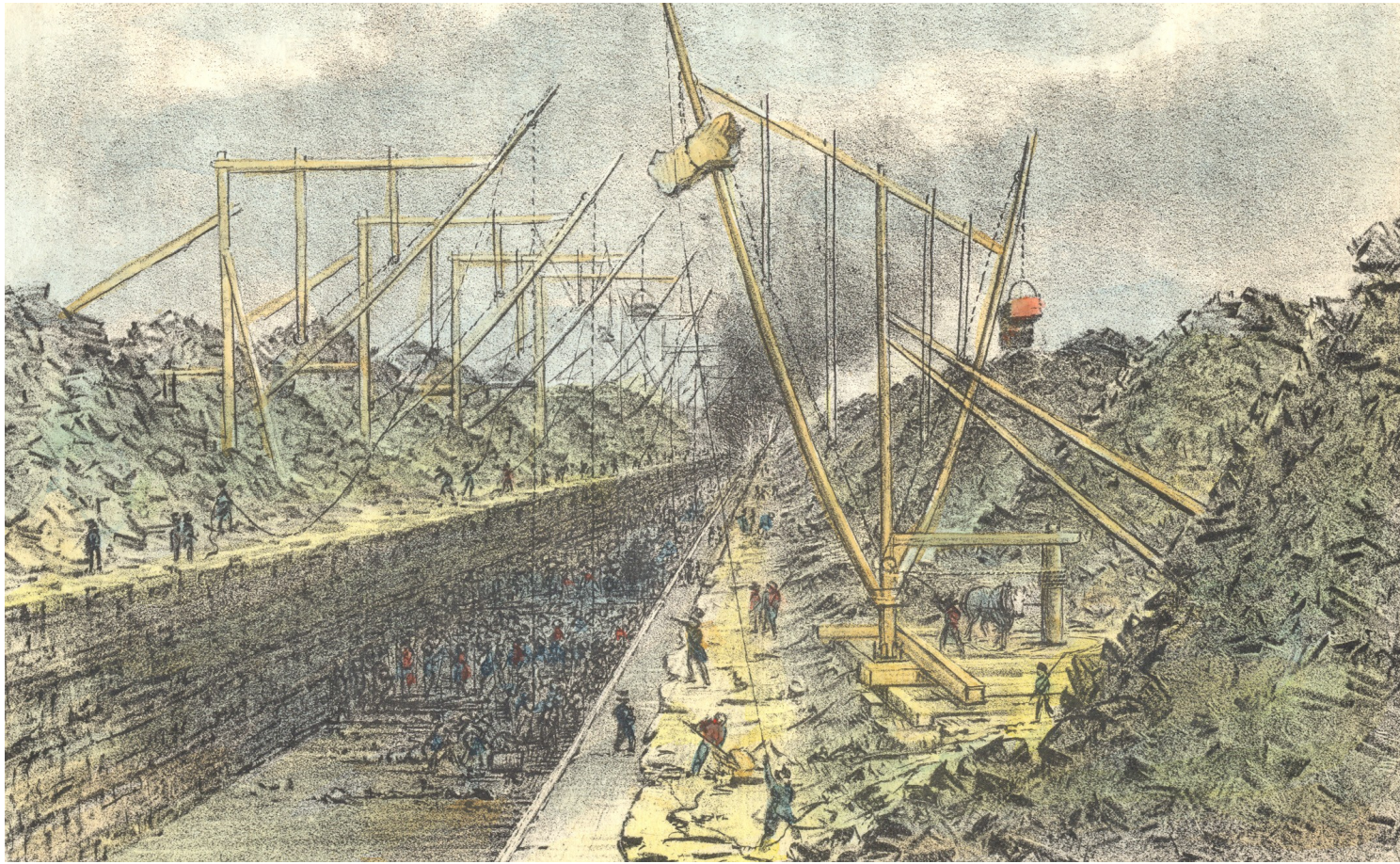
As production increased, a massive problem emerged: transportation. The U.S. was vast, and roads were little more than dirt trails. Moving heavy bulk goods by horse-drawn cart was slow and incredibly expensive.



In the late 18th century, Robert Fulton recognized the potential of steam. He built the first commercially successful steamboat, operating between NYC and Albany, completely changing the speed at which goods could travel on water.



Fulton's designs were soon adapted for the mighty Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Steamboats allowed goods to be transported **upstream** against the current, opening up the interior of the continent to global trade.



But what about areas without navigable rivers? The solution was the Erie Canal. Built between 1817 and 1821, it stretched 363 miles with 34 locks, connecting the Great Lakes in Buffalo to the Hudson River in Albany.



Historic Erie Canal · [Join](#)

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Erie Canal Shipping Costs and Delivery Time Reduction

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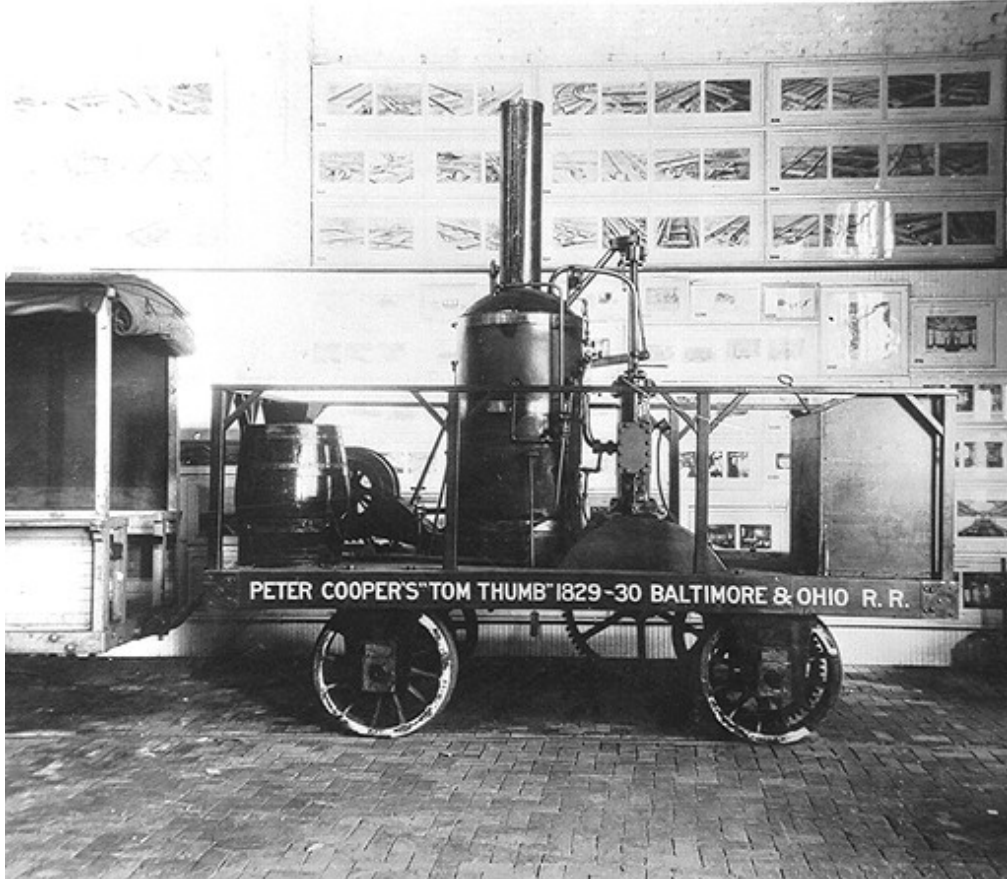
A trip from Buffalo to New York City that used to take 3 weeks, now took around 8 days. On average, increased volume (tonnage) and reduced delivery time, shipping costs were reduced by about 90%. The trip from Buffalo to New York, freight was reduced from about \$90.00 per ton to around \$4.00. New York State began to charge a tonnage tax to cover the cost of construction, it was paid for in 9 years, far exceeding expectations. The attached document is an actual tax bill for 1833/1834, falling within the period where the money was paying off the debt.



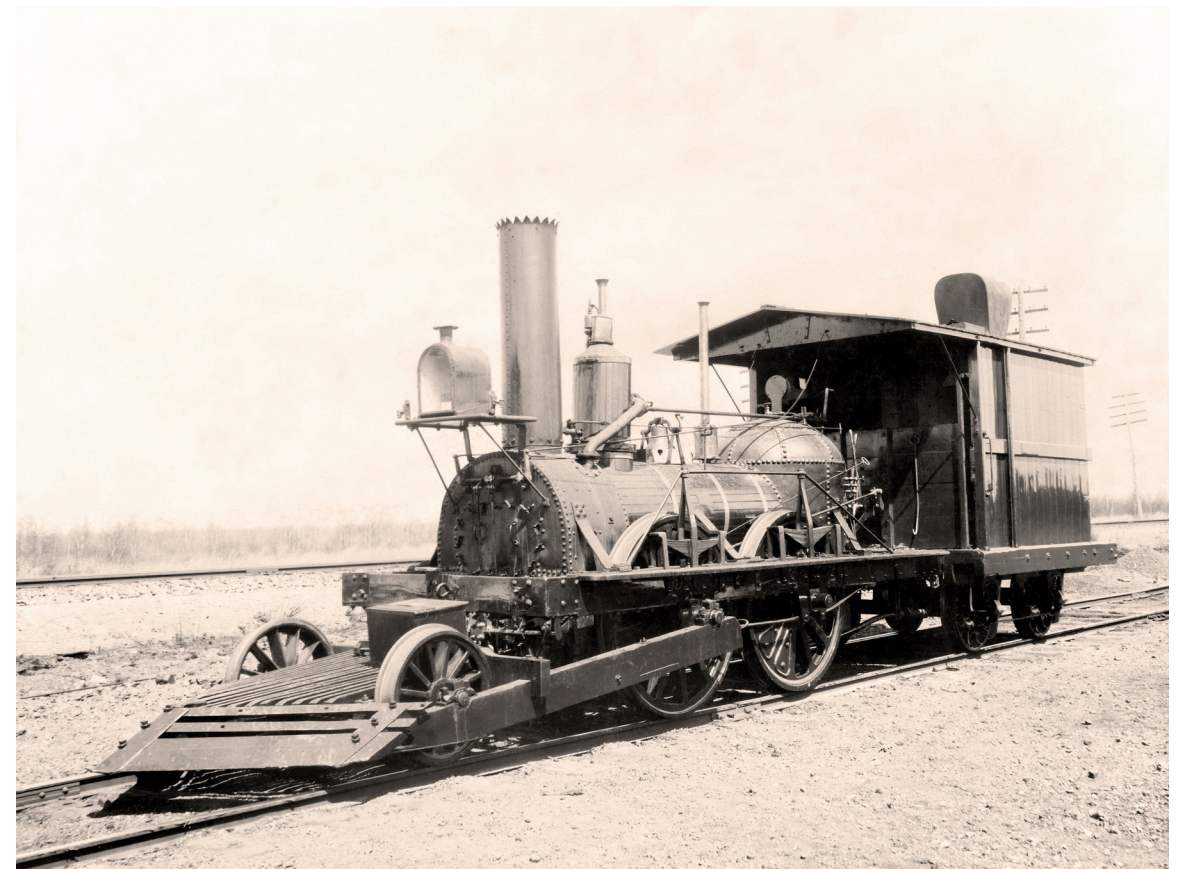
The Erie Canal was an economic miracle. It cut transport costs by about 95%. A single horse pulling a barge could move 60,000 pounds, compared to a packhorse's 250 pounds. It triggered a "canal age" across the nation.

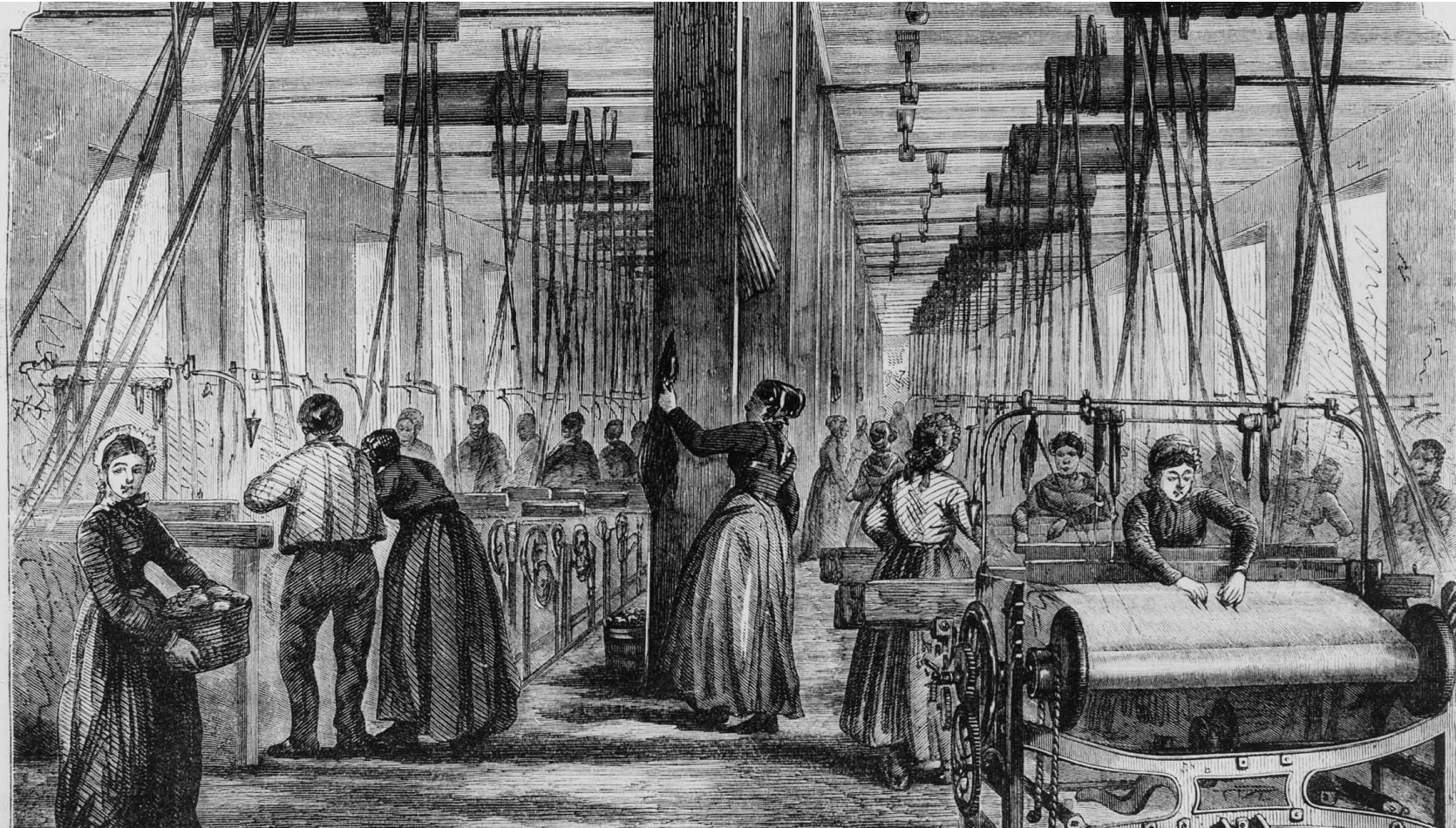
Following the canals came the railroads. Though they dominated the **Second** Industrial Revolution, early rail lines in the 1830s and 40s began connecting cities year-round, unhindered by winter freezes that stopped canal traffic.

Tom Thumb



John Bull





This infrastructure allowed factories to boom, changing American society forever. We shifted from an "outwork" system—where artisans made goods slowly at home—to the "factory system," where workers gathered in large buildings to operate machinery.



Factories needed immense labor. Companies recruited thousands of young New England farm girls to work the mills. While wages were low compared to men's, this marked one of the first times young women earned their own money and gained economic independence.



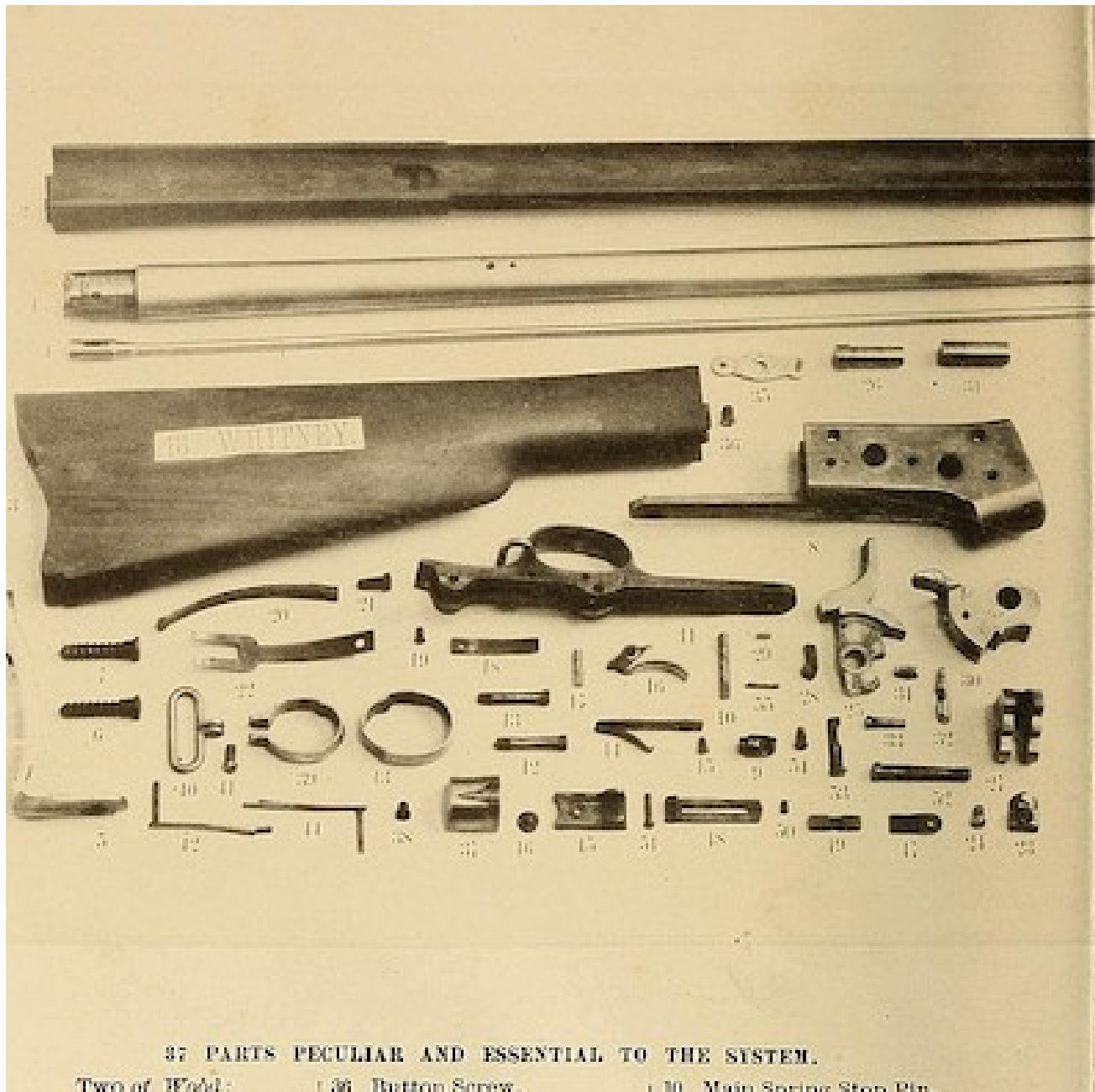
This era birthed the modern concept of "wage labor." Instead of selling a product you made with your own hands, you sold your **time** to an employer. This fundamental psychological and economic shift defines modern American life.



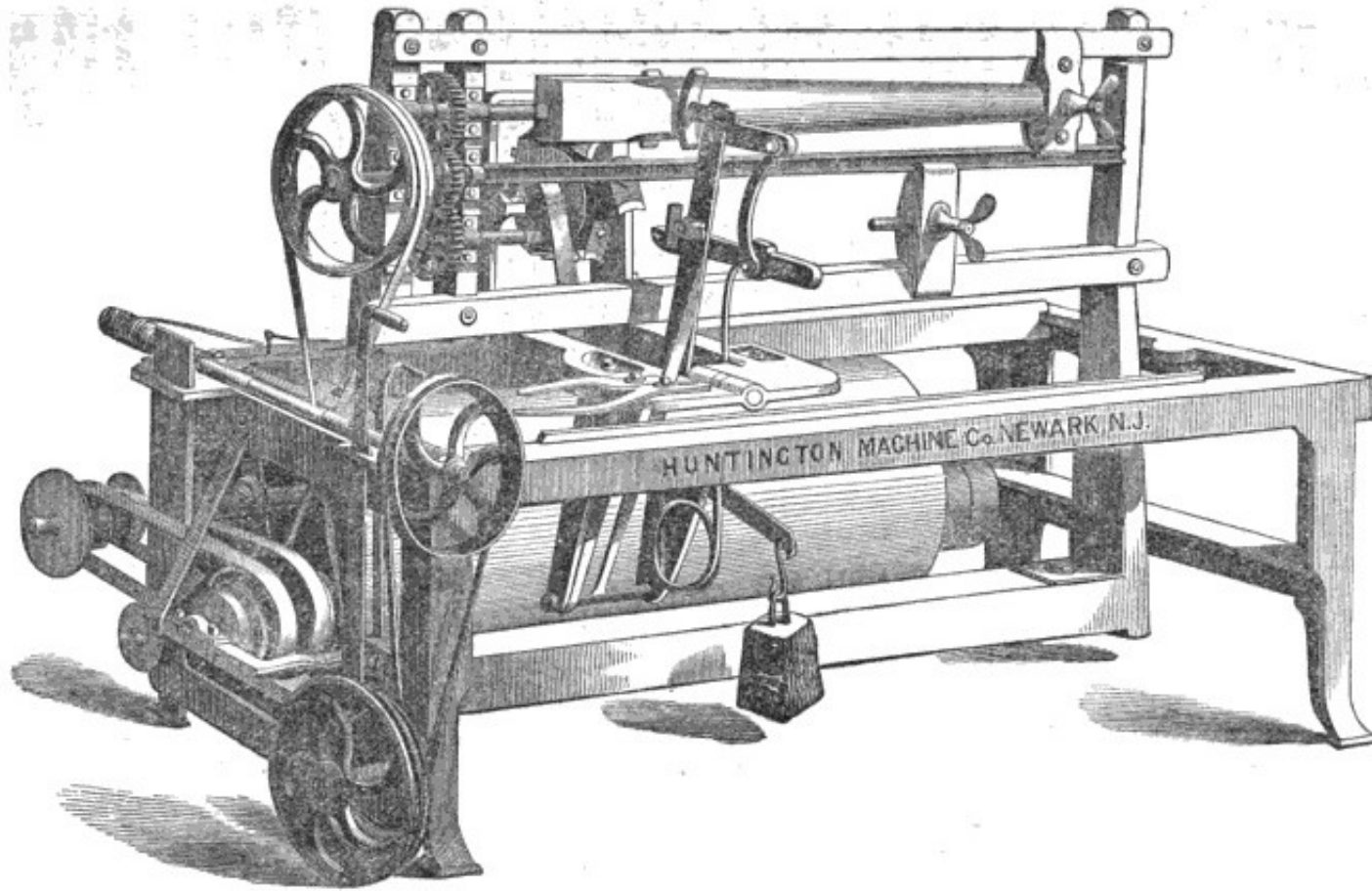
The factory system caused massive urbanization. People moved away from isolated farms to population centers where the jobs were. Cities like Chicago, Philadelphia, and New York exploded in population, wealth, and density.



A massive breakthrough during this era was the concept of "interchangeable parts." Previously, machines and weapons were custom-built by artisans; if a part broke, a new one had to be custom-carved.



In 1801, Eli Whitney popularized this idea by demonstrating to Congress how he could assemble muskets from a random pile of identical, standardized parts. This minimized the time and skill needed to assemble and repair devices.



Another key innovator was Thomas Blanchard, who invented a water-powered lathe in 1819 that could trace a pattern and produce perfectly identical copies of wooden shapes, like gun stocks. Standardization was becoming the norm.



Interchangeable parts fundamentally eliminated the need for highly skilled craftsmen. It allowed factories to hire unskilled laborers who would do just one repetitive step—setting the direct stage for the modern assembly line.

U.S. 1790



U.S. 1870



By the time the Civil War ended, America was unrecognizable from its colonial days. Driven by figures like Slater and Whitney, and connected by canals and steam, the First Industrial Revolution paved the way for the U.S. to become a global economic titan. Thank you.

Industrialization has changed our country and our lives. It has created great prosperity but also created a class of industrialists with no ties to our nation.

With their great wealth, they skew our political and economic systems.

Globalization allows these global industrialists to be even more aloof and negligent to our nation.

Both blessings (prosperity) and pains (replacement migration) have arisen from this.

The End